

Masonic Corn

- Scott Rowe

The famous Roslyn Chapel outside of Edinburg Scotland has been a Mecca for scholars and historians. It is a compelling place to study both religious symbolism and more mysterious hints of possible esoteric alternate history secrets. On its walls, ceilings and floors, thousands of hand carved figures and ornamental decorations depict everything from well known Christian symbols to others that would have been considered adopted from pagan religions. Perhaps in a part of the world strongly influenced by Celtic and Druid beliefs, such an unusual mixture of icons was not that surprising in a chapel built by Catholics of that time.

One of the most controversial symbols found in Rosslyn is that of an ear of corn. Alternative historians have argued that when the chapel was built, corn was not a staple in any part of northern Europe. This fact was supposed to lend credence to the legend that one of the ancestors of the Sinclair family that built Rosslyn, Prince Henry Sinclair, made a mysterious voyage to the new world a hundred years before Columbus, where he was introduced to corn as raised by the native Indians. Although the original Prince Henry was of Norse descent and probably had the seafaring blood of his ancestral Viking heritage, there is no solid proof that the journey was ever accomplished. Other historians argue for a Masonic relationship to the ear of corn, as corn symbolically represented one of the ancient methods of payment to the original builders of King Solomon's temple. Here again Rosslyn does not give up its secrets easily, as corn is but one of several symbols found there that also occur in masonry. Unfortunately the timelines of construction of the chapel preceded the founding of our lodges by several hundred years either making this an unusual coincidence or a controversial suggestion that the origins of masonry have some mysterious connection to the Sinclairs and their medieval links.

Ironically most Masonic historians concede that the reference to corn in our ceremonies is a modern day adaption of other food staples. Corn in the yellow and highly hybrid version we would recognize today was not widely cultivated in the areas of Israel during biblical times and the use of the word in the Bible probably referred to the common wheat and barley grains that were grown then. When the builders were paid their wages in corn, wine and oil, they most likely received wheat or barley instead.

Masonry being a speculative discipline still attaches great importance to the symbol of corn. Masons who practice our craft can receive a wage just as our ancient brethren did but it comes from the labours of Freemasonry which include charity, uprightness of conduct and brotherly love.

It has been said that: "The Mason who works for the joy of working, does his part in the lodge work, takes his place among the labourers of Freemasonry, he will receive corn, wine and oil in measures pressed down and running over and know a fraternal joy as substantial in fact as it is ethereal in quality: as real in his heart as it is intangible to the profane world".

The mysterious ear of corn on the wall of a 13th century Scottish chapel has many interpretations. It may have been gleaned from the knowledge of returning Crusaders, actually prove a link to an epic but unrecorded sea voyage, or point to a little known link between Rosslyn and Masonry. The truth is

perhaps lost in the mists of time, but the importance of Masonic Corn is still as relevant today as it was at our founding.